

# The Ames Intelligencer

Issue 3 of 4 ■ Ames Heritage Association Newsletter ■ July 2002

■ The Ames Intelligencer was the first newspaper in the city of Ames ■

## AHA Wins Union Pacific Foundation Grant

In May, Ames Heritage Association was awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Union Pacific (Railroad) Foundation. AHA requested support for developing and implementing a series of traveling "suitcase programs" to tell the story of Ames' history to learners of all ages. This "museum without walls" was conceived as an affordable and manageable way for a small organization like AHA to take history to the community, and as an alternative to trying to keep facility open hours with modest finances and human resources.

Foundation staff was impressed with this unique idea!

The grant support from the U.P. Foundation will be used to hire a person to deliver the "history suitcase" programs. This staff member will build relationships with city and county school teachers and present regular programs. This will bring youth (and ultimately, other groups) in closer contact with the local history experience and, we hope, provide a basis for further development.

A call for applicants has been initiated, resulting in a good response from a number of well-qualified individuals. The search committee is in the process of narrowing the field to select a single applicant. An update on these efforts will appear in the next issue. The AHA Board is looking forward to an exciting year with the aid of the Union Pacific Foundation!

## Strusses Named Distinguished Board Members

Each year, the Ames Community Arts Council presents a number of awards to recognize achievements and people in the arts in Ames. This year, Rollie and Willie Struss, recently "retired" from the Ames Heritage Association Board, were recognized for their contributions to AHA. Rollie and Willie have been involved



Ames is a somewhat transient community, due to the presence of Iowa State University. Our hope and dream is that exposure to meaningful, interesting, and, perhaps even, entertaining historical experiences will kindle an interest in and respect for area history that will help people feel "rooted" to the community. We hope our program will also create broader support for a permanent museum facility.

The initial focus population to be served will be elementary and junior high age children. But we believe that a carefully prepared historical "suitcase" exhibit can also be appropriate for other age groups including pre-schools, young parents, service organizations, senior citizens, international ISU students, and others.



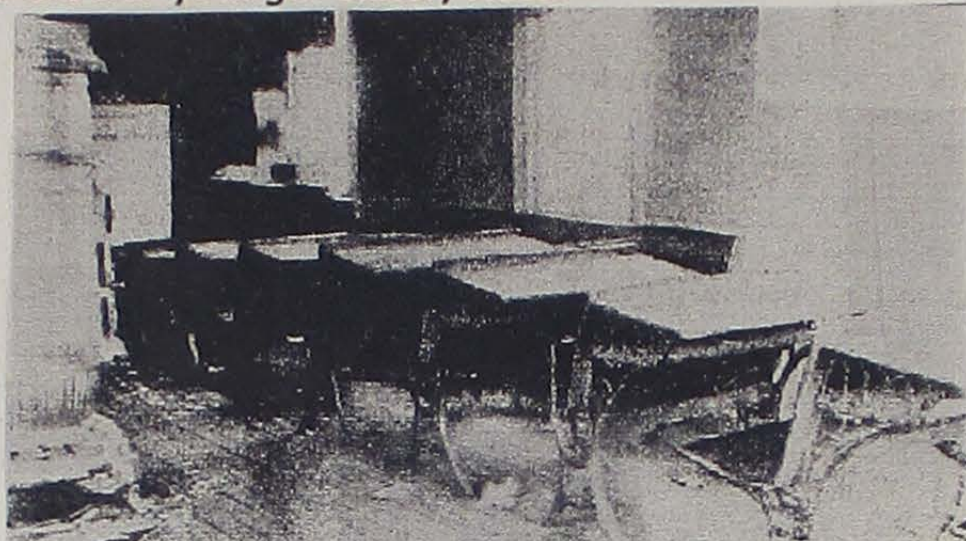
for over nine years, and have taken the lead in completing the restoration of the Bauge Log Home. AHA was proud and pleased that two dedicated individuals who have done so much for our organization were honored.



## Life in a One-Room School

[Although AHA's Hoggatt School operated only from 1862 to 1868, most one-room schools weren't short-lived. During the first half of the 20th century, such schools were common in Iowa. Only in the 1950s did consolidation eliminate virtually all of them. **James L. Graham**, who lives at 1526 Top-O-Hollow, attended a one-room school in Madison County 1939-47. He has written a personal reminiscence of his experiences.]

I attended Penn #3, located one and a half miles south of Dexter on the old Creamery Road. My father, James C. Graham, attended the same school from 1906 to 1914, indeed his name, carved with his pocketknife on one of the desks, was still visible when I attended. My great aunt, Lillie Graham, taught in the school in 1879, as did her younger sister, Kate.

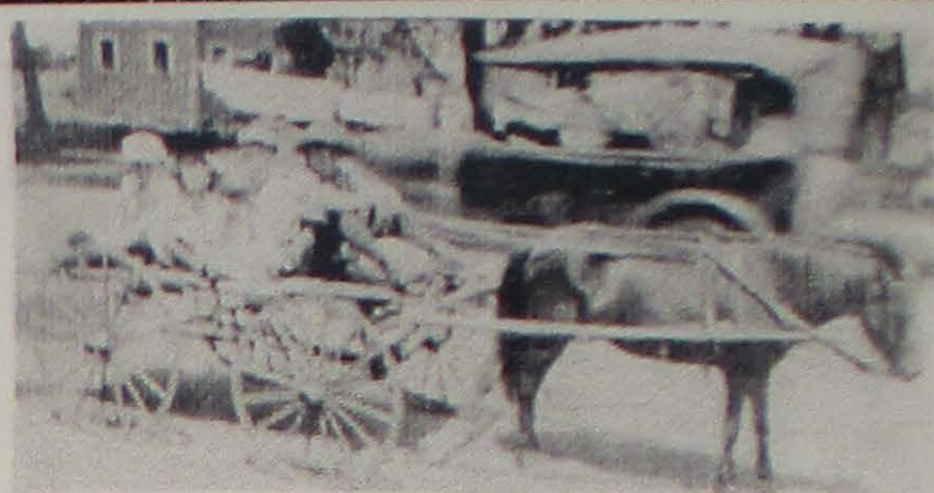


Clearview School circa 1920 [F. T. Brown Archive]

The teacher's large wooden desk was in the front of the class with a large slate blackboard in back of it. We had maps and pictures of Presidents, like Washington and Lincoln, hanging on the wall. Besides the one large room, there was a hallway where we could hang up our coats and keep our overshoes. Everyone, even the girls, wore overshoes back then. We had neither sidewalks nor paved roads to walk on.

Each school's district covered a four-mile square area, so that no child would be more than two miles away. I walked a mile to school each way on a hilly, muddy country road. My good friends the Clausens--Ben, Jim, and Zeld--lived almost two miles from school so their Dad hitched a pony to a 2-wheel cart to take them to and from school. During school hours the pony grazed on the school yard grass. We had to watch where we stepped at recess time!

Farm boys and girls had chores to do at home. During the late fall and early winter, I ran a trap line as long as 5 miles, where I caught muskrats, mink, possums, and skunks for their furs. I would check the traps in the morning before school. I will always wonder, after catching all those skunks, and minks, which also smelled pretty rank, why they let me stay in school. I must have smelled bad. My mother made me change clothes and wash up before school, but removing skunk odor from your skin was difficult. Annoying things like that didn't bother people back then like it does today. Some of the other boys fed livestock before school, so they didn't smell very good either. Maybe one smell canceled out the other.



Pony cart circa 1917 [F. T. Brown Archive]

### What's for Lunch?

Home was too far to walk there for lunch, so we all brought ours. With no refrigerators and few ice boxes, food couldn't be kept from spoiling. At our farm we kept milk and butter fresh by putting them in a cream can and dropping it into our well. To get down to where it was cool took over 30 feet of rope. Still, leftovers had to be eaten the next day. So our school lunches usually were sandwiches made from the leftovers of the previous night's dinner.

Our neighbor lady, Gertie Fritz, and my mother would can mincemeat out of lean beef, fresh apples, and dried fruit, like raisins and currants. Not only did it make great pie, but I often took mincemeat sandwiches with me to school for lunch. Very tasty. On April 1st my mother would embarrass me by wrapping a corn cob in wax paper and putting it in my lunch.

In winter we had our version of a "hot lunch program." Students were encouraged to bring soup or something that could be warmed up in a fruit jar. The teacher would put a pan of hot water on the school's small kerosene stove to heat the fruit jars. Sometimes a jar would get too hot and break; some kid would miss his or her "hot lunch."

### No Water, No Heat, No Electricity

Rural Iowa had no electricity until the REA began stringing wires and hooking up farmsteads after World War II in the late 1940s. Almost all of my school years at Penn #3 was without electricity. But we thought nothing of it. Three large windows together on the east side and another three to the south let in sufficient light so we never seemed to have any problem reading or doing our lessons even in the darkest winter days. Kerosene lamps and a gasoline Aladdin lamp provided light at night when we had PTA meetings.

A large coal stove stood in the front of the classroom. In extremely cold weather, the teacher would have all of us sit around the stove until the classroom warmed up. No running water meant that we had to bring in drinking water. The school well was unusable, so the teacher would assign two boys to take the water bucket to the Bloomquist farm, a short distance away, and get our water from their well.

No running water also meant that the restrooms were out-houses behind the school, one for the girls and one for the boys. The out-houses were very cold in winter and in the summer, they stunk. Either way, when you went to the toilet, you didn't stay very long. Students

[continued on page 4]



# Take Me Out of the Ballgame

by Jorgen Rasmussen

Thousands of men have played major league baseball. Only one of them was born in Ames. And he played over a century ago and is better known as an evangelist than as a ballplayer.

William "Billy" Sunday was born in a log cabin on his grand-parents' (Martin and Mary Ann Cory) farm just south of Ames on September, 19, 1862. Now Highway 30 passes just north of the site, with Highway 69 a short distance to the west. When Airport Road crosses 69, it becomes Billy Sunday Drive. The cabin is long gone, but the Cory family cemetery still remains.



Billy never knew his father, who died of pneumonia while serving in the Union Army during the Civil War. When two subsequent marriages were unsuccessful, Billy's mother found herself unable to support her sons. So Billy wound up in an orphanage. As a teenager, he returned to the Cory farm. Unable to get along with his grandfather, he struck out on his own. He attended high school in Nevada for a time and, then, got a job with an undertaker in Marshalltown.

Baseball had surged in popularity after the Civil War. During lulls in battles soldiers in both the Union and Confederate armies had played the game. Prisoners of war and their guards made it one of the chief ways of passing the time. Thus in 1876 what is recognized as the first professional major league was formed. Charter members were the Chicago White Stockings (forerunners of today's Cubs, not the White Sox). A star player for the team from its beginning was Adrian "Cap" Anson, who in 1879 also became the manager.

## Billy and Cap

Anson had been born in Marshalltown 10 years before Sunday. Although Cap was a great ballplayer, he also was a racist. He, more than any other one person, was responsible for making major league baseball "whites-only" until after World War Two. In the 1880s minor league teams had black players. During exhibition games, Cap regularly threatened to pull the White Stockings off the field if a minor league team used a black. The issue came to a head when the owner of the New York Giants planned to bring a black pitcher up from the minors. Anson drummed up enough support from other owners to keep the black star and all other blacks out of the majors.

Besides working in Marshalltown, Sunday had been playing amateur baseball. The local team on which he was going out on his own. His first platform appearance he played outfield won two state championships. Cap Anson's aunt, who still lived in Marshalltown, told her nephew to check out the champs' great outfielder. He

did and signed up Billy, bringing him up to the White Stockings on 22 May 1883. You could say that Billy went 4 for 4 in his debut--4 strike outs, that is.

## Billy's Career in the Majors

The White Stockings' outfield was too solid for Billy to become a regular. His batting average ranged from .222 to .256. At 5'10" and 160 pounds, he was known for covering a lot of ground in the outfield and on the base paths. In 1887 he got a chance to be more than a substitute--playing more games in right field than any other White Stocking--and responded with a .291 average, the best of his career. All this earned him was a ticket to Pittsburgh for the following season.

In Pittsburgh he was a regular, playing more games than any other year in his career. Unfortunately, his batting average collapsed to .236. He played another year and a half with Pittsburgh before winding up with Philadelphia. In his final year he played 117 games with these two teams, stealing 84 bases, third highest in the league. He had played in just under 500 games with a lifetime average of .248.



## Billy Gets Religion

Nineteenth century ballplayers were not regarded as upstanding citizens. Remember, there were no lights, so there was plenty of time for night-time carousing. Sunday was not a hard drinker, but certainly wouldn't say no to a stein or two. So how did he become an evangelist? Strangely enough, drink led him to it. Sunday and a couple of his hell-raising team-mates were enjoying themselves in a saloon, when Billy heard some music. It was coming from the Pacific Garden Mission right across the street. The Mission still stands there today on South State Street near the Loop. (The saloon is long gone.) In the early 1880s the White Stockings' playing field was just a few blocks away, near to where the Chicago Art Institute now stands. Billy liked the hymns so much that he went to the Mission to hear an evangelist preach. Thus his life began to move in a religious direction. Other players began calling him "Parson" or "The Evangelist".

In a crucial game for the league championship in 1886, Detroit had two men on base with two out in the ninth. The batter hit a drive that appeared to be out of Sunday's reach. As he raced back he prayed, "Lord, if you ever helped a mortal man, help me get that ball." He stuck out his arm, the ball hit in the glove, and the White Stockings won. Billy declared that that was his first lesson in the power of prayer.

After leaving baseball, he worked for the Chicago YMCA for a few years. Then he joined with an established evangelist on the revival circuit, eventually



going out on his own. His first platform appearance was in Garner, Iowa in 1896. While leaving baseball meant a drop in income from \$400 a month to only \$83, he eventually earned much more than he could have hoped to as a ballplayer. During the height of his evangelist career, he made \$40,000 a year.

He died in Chicago in 1935 and is buried there.  
[One of the sources for this account was an article by Farwell T. Brown.]

### **One-Room School** (continued)

would hold up one finger to get permission to go to the out-house. Every Halloween both outhouses would be overturned; our fathers would have to set them back up so we could use them again.

The school did, however, have a telephone--a manual farm line with 8 other subscribers. Each subscriber had a special ring, for the schoolhouse it was three short rings. To call another line, you had to ring one long ring to alert the operator at Dexter. Then the operator placed the call for you. A crude system, but it worked well.

**[To be continued in the next issue.]**

### **Gone But Not Forgotten?**

Do any of our readers remember George Shuey? If so, please send an e-mail to: Editor at [marti@isunet.net](mailto:marti@isunet.net).

### **Now Open!**

**Hoggatt School**, Ames' first, located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18th and Burnett, is opened for visitors during the summer from 2 to 4:30 on Saturday and Sunday. See what James Graham wrote about.

**Bauge Log Home**, in McFarland Park, is opened each Sunday during the summer from 1 to 4. Enjoy a taste of Norwegian homesteader life at the turn of the 19th century.

Ames Heritage Association Board: Pres., Kathy Svec; V-P., Carole Jensen; Sec., Letitia Hansen; Treas., Peggy Baer; Margaret Benson, Catherine Hunt, Lynn Jenison, Leo Lawler, Jorgen Rasmussen, Dennis Wendell, meets monthly.

AHA is a 501C3 non-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs, and exhibitions and by the operation of two historic sites. Memberships start at \$25. Donations of historical material gratefully welcomed. Depending on price and suitable for the AHA collection, some items may be purchased. Office: 108 5th, Ames, 515-232-2148.

The Intelligencer newsletter, named after an early Ames newspaper, is sent four times a year to AHA members. Comments and questions to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or [marti@isunet.net](mailto:marti@isunet.net).

Ames Intelligencer  
Ames Heritage Association  
PO Box 821  
Ames, Iowa 50010

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